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ABSTRACT

The majority of indigenous U.S. languages are no longer learned at home, and the last generation of native speakers are aging. There are increasingly strong efforts by communities to keep their languages alive by developing teaching programs in their schools and communities, although finding teachers is problematic. This paper focuses on how teachers who are not fluent in the language can develop effective lessons, explaining that elderly fluent speakers in the community may be too old to teach children but can still act as partners in language teaching by being language mentors to teachers (teacher-learners) who are not fluent. The paper suggests five components of a language lesson, noting that teacher-learners must select the topics for their learning efficiently in order to keep one step ahead of their students. The five components include the following: the lesson proper for a given day, rituals that will occur every day or on a regular basis, review of previous lessons, classroom management language, and classroom patter/chit chat. It is important for all components to occur in the target language. The paper describes how to use storytelling as a lesson proper (e.g., learn the story from the mentor, learn related vocabulary, and incorporate vocabulary and sentences into lessons). (SM)

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How to Teach when the Teacher Isn't Fluent

Leanne Hinton

ED 482 036

The majority of the indigenous languages in our country are no longer being learned at home, and the last generation of native speakers are growing older and older.[1] At the same time, there are increasingly strong efforts by communities to keep their languages alive by developing teaching programs of various sorts in the schools and in the community. The problem is, who will teach the language? Some communities are lucky enough to still have young and middle aged adult speakers who also have or can get training in language teaching practices. But as the speakers age, increasingly, the energy and the burden for language revitalization is among the younger adult generations who are not fluent in their language. It is sad, but it is true, and we can do no less than honor and support those with the drive and the bravery to take on this task. This paper is an attempt to support these efforts by discussing the problem that such heroes must face: how to teach a language when the teacher isn't fluent.

It is very easy for a non-fluent speaker (or often, even a fluent one) to fall back on a form of language-teaching that involves word-lists taught through the written word. This, after all, can be done with extremely minimal knowledge of a language. However, learning words in writing, in isolation, translated and explained in English, is not an effective way to learn a language. If the goal of teaching the language is for children to become conversationally proficient, then it is important to teach conversation. Programs that have been effective in actually producing fluent speakers generally use immersion techniques, where no English is allowed in the classroom, and teaching takes place through conversation in the Native language and other forms of discourse embedded in interesting activities. Such models as Total Physical Response, or even just a combination of rich language input and common sense, tend to be the most successful ways of bringing students to conversational proficiency. How can a non-fluent speaker possibly do this form of teaching?

In order to approach some possible ways that a non-fluent teacher can teach effectively, I will focus primarily on the situation that many communities are in today: there are elderly fluent speakers in the community—too old to teach a class full of energetic children, but still able to be of great help as a partner in language teaching. These elders can also be the "language mentors" to the teachers who are not (yet) fluent. We will call the non-fluent teachers the "teacher-learners," since they are both teaching and learning the language. These teacher-learners may also frequently utilize the help of linguistic materials that are available in the language, and sometimes enlist the help of linguists as well.[2]

First of all, if it is at all possible, the teacher-learner should be given the opportunity to spend some months or even years attending to the development of his or her own fluency before intensive teaching duties are foisted upon her (or him). Mentored language learning with an elder is a good way for the future teacher to develop her own conversational fluency (Hinton et al, 2002). Working additionally with linguistic documentation can help with increasing vocabu-

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lary and developing grammatical accuracy. If the trainee must teach, it would be best for the teaching duties to be light for the first year or so, to avoid getting trapped in a situation where so much time must be spent on the development of lesson plans that the teacher cannot attend to her own language development. The more the teacher can develop her language competency and confidence, the easier it will be for her to teach effectively. However, even if the trainee is lucky enough to have a year or so of language learning before she goes into the classroom, she will still probably not be fluent.[3]

A teacher who is learning the language at the same time will have to select the topics for her learning efficiently, to keep one step ahead of her students. In order to help determine what the teacher-learner might focus on, let us name the typical components of a language lesson, and then go over these one by one—what will be taught in the classroom, and therefore what should be learned in preparation. The most common kind of program right now is a lesson of half an hour to an hour in length. This is not as ideal as a "language survival school,"[4] where the Native language is the language of instruction, and no English is heard the whole school-day through. However, a half hour or an hour a day is pretty much the maximum that many communities can commit, and is probably the most realistic time period for a non-fluent teacher. Therefore, I will assume this for the purposes of this paper and suggest the following components of the language lesson:

A. **The lesson proper**—the words or phrases that you are focusing on for a given day, and any activities, tests, etc. that relate to the lesson.
B. **Rituals**—repetitive language events that will occur every day or at least on a regular basis; for example, greetings, perhaps a daily discussion of the weather, snack time, etc.
C. **Review** of previous lessons
D. **Classroom management language**—language such as "Come in," "Sit down," "eyes forward," "listen to me," "Don't hit!", "Everyone take a piece of paper," "What's wrong? Why are you crying?" , etc.
E. **Classroom patter**—the informal language that comes in between everything else.

It is important for all components to take place in the target language rather than have some in English. Often classroom management language and chitchat take place in English even if the other three components are in the target language. To avoid this mistake, the teacher-learner should make a conscious effort to master the use of the target language for *all* components. It may not be possible for a given teacher-learner to do *everything* in the target language; but that should be the *goal*. And one way to reach this goal is to notice whenever you are speaking English and make a mental note that you will ask your language mentor how to say that very thing in the target language. I will now go over the five components in some detail, and discuss how a teacher can manage her own learning process in order to handle each of these components successfully:

A. The lesson proper. There is good news for the teacher-learner: a lesson may consist of only a few words or phrases, which are repeated and practiced through various activities. Wayne and Agnes Holm (2003) suggest that as little as two words could be taught in a lesson. It is extremely common for teachers to try to teach too much in a single lesson, so relax, and just choose a couple of words or phrases that you will focus on in a given day. But what kind of words should they be? Think VERBS! Avoid the common error of focusing on nouns all the time. A person cannot communicate if all he knows is nouns — but give him a few verbs and he can actually do communicative acts. Unlike English, where a sentence has to have a noun or pronoun in it (such as "**He** is sleeping", most Native American languages can make an entire sentence out of a verb alone. For example, in Havasupai[5] one way of saying "He (or she) is sleeping" would be **smagyu**. It is just as easy to teach a child a verb as it is to teach him a noun, and when you teach him a verb, he can actually use it to communicate something. The verb **smagyu** is a complete sentence that describes something that is happening. If you had taught your student the word for "chair" instead, he wouldn't have a way to make a sentence or communicate anything. You can't just say "chair" and have it be a meaningful communicative event. Here is a part of a lesson that teaches students two verbs, again using Havasupai as an example. This whole lesson would be done entirely orally; no written form of the words are presented to the student. No English would be used in this lesson— the teacher makes herself understood through nonverbal communication. You and the children (let us call them Martha, Horace, and Violet) can use your imagination to expand the class to more students) are sitting on chairs in a circle.

Speaker	**Utterance**[6]	**Nonverbal communication**	**Explanation**
Teacher	**Martha, mskwii!**	Teacher looks at Martha and gestures with her hand to communicate that Martha should stand up	**Mskwii** is a command that translates as "Stand up!"
Martha		Stands up	Student understands because of the gesture. She is not being asked to speak yet
Teacher	**(Haniga!) Muwah!**	Teacher gestures with her hand to communicate that Martha should sit down	**Haniga!** ="good!" **Muwah!** ="sit down!"
Martha		Sits down	
Teacher	**Horace, mskwii!**	Teacher now turns to Horace and gestures	
Horace		Stands up	
Teacher	**(Haniga!) Muwah!**		

Speaker	Utterance	Nonverbal communication	Explanation
Horace		Sits down	
Teacher			Same commands repeated to Violet and other students
Teacher	**Martha, mskwii!**	This time the teacher does not use gestures, to see if the student can understand the command	
Martha		Stands up	
Teacher			Tell Martha to sit down again, then do the same sequence with Horace. But then:
Teacher	**Violet, mswkii!**		
Violet		Stands up	
Teacher	**Mskwii!**		This is a trick. The Students may not really be listening; they just know that when the teacher says something they stand; when she says something else, they sit. But now the teacher has just told a standing student to stand!
Violet		Probably starts to sit	
Teacher	**(Eeeh! Opa! M'eva!) Mskwii!**	Smiles, points to her ear when she says "M'eva!" ("Listen!"); gives gesture to stand up when she says "Mskwii!"	**Eeeh** means something like "Ha ha, gotcha!" **Opa** = "no," **M'eva** means "Listen!"
Violet		Stands up	
Teacher	**Mskwii!**	(No gesture this time)	
Violet		This time Violet probably stands her ground	Now the students are really listening. They won't make the same mistake Violet made.

The teacher continues to go around the class playing this game, where the student must actually listen to the word being said in order to follow the command correctly. Sometimes while the student is sitting, the teacher will say "Stand!", but other times she'll say "Sit!" After doing this for a little while, the students have truly learned to distinguish between the two commands as they hear them.

Next, the teacher begins to get the students themselves to say the words, and tell *her* (and afterwards, other students) what to do. Here's how this part might go:

Speaker	Language	Nonverbal communication	Explanation
Teacher	**Horace, (Maj ñimjgnaja) "muwah!" "Muwah."**	This new exercise needs lots of gestures at first. While saying "you tell me," point to Horace with your lips (this is the Havasupai way of pointing at someone), then point to yourself with your finger.	"Horace, you tell me: Muwah!' 'Muwah!'"

If this is the very first lesson that the students have ever received in the language, it may take a couple of minutes before they understand that they are now expected to tell *you* what to do. For this first attempt to get someone to speak, choose a student who is not shy or easily intimidated. This command may have to be repeated, and said in different ways before Horace understands and responds appropriately. It is important that the teacher *not* switch into English here. Just keep trying in different ways, always speaking in the Native language and using nonverbal communication to get the student to say "**muwah!**" Then the moment he says it, the teacher sits down (as she was just told to do by the student), and praises the student. Then look at the next student and tell that student to get you to stand up. Continue at least part way around the room, or if there are really only three students, continue all the way around the room a few times. After a bit, stop verbally telling the students which command to use, and just gesture that they should speak. If they can say the right thing without hearing you tell them what to say first, they are well on the way toward mastering these words.

Then change it again—get the students to tell *each other* what to do. You can do this first by using another flurry of gestures as you speak, to get Violet to understand that she is supposed to say one of the commands to Horace, and then get Horace to say a command to Martha, and so on. This is a time where you and the students can improvise a bit. Have a student say more than one command to the next student, such as "Sit!", then, "Stand!", then, "Sit!" If one student starts playing the game you were playing earlier, of saying "sit!" to a student who is

already sitting, laugh along with the class, praise the creative student, and help get that game going. And/or, have one student come to the front of the room and be the teacher for awhile, telling the students what to do. Or have the students break into pairs or small groups, and have them practice the verbs independently. Or take out a couple of hand puppets, put them on your hands and demonstrate one telling the other what to do, and the other responding to the commands; then pass around the hand puppets and have the students perform.

To summarize, then, this is all you need to do for this one lesson. This lesson and a couple of rituals (such as greetings and goodbyes) can take the whole period by itself. In order to do this lesson, the teacher doesn't have to know all that much language—she only has to know the *right* language. Thus in preparation for the lesson, she needed to learn from her mentor (or from written materials) the following words and phrases:

Muwah! "Sit down!"
Mswkii! "Stand up!"

and for the classroom management talk and chit-chat, she needed

Haniga! "Good!"
M'eva! "Listen!"
mij "say it!"
(Maj) nyimgwaawa! "You speak!" (The pronoun **maj** "you" is only used for emphasis or contrast; the rest of the time, this command, like the others, can be used without the pronoun.)
Opa! No!
Eeeh! joking exclamation

The teacher could handle this lesson knowing only 8 words and phrases — 2 for the lesson proper, and 6 more for classroom management and patter. But she must truly *know* these words in order to do this class — she cannot teach this class effectively by looking at the words on paper; she must know them by heart, just as she is trying to get the students to do. She can only come to know the words well by practicing them, either alone, or with her mentor, or with friends, relatives or colleagues that she can capture for awhile.

The next lesson would build on this one, perhaps with just one or two other verbs thrown in, such as "Turn around!" and "Walk!" Either in the second lesson or soon thereafter, the teacher will start using a different form of the words:

'wa'yu I'm sitting.
'skwii'yu I'm standing.

And to make this lesson work, she needs to know a question:

Gwe gmwiingmi? What are you doing?

In this lesson, she first introduces the two new verb forms, **'wa'yu** and **'skwii'yu** by demonstration. She sits when she says **'wa'yu** and stands when she says **'skwii'yu**. Then she gives the command form to Violet, **Mskwii!** and then, shrugging shoulders and giving other appropriate gestures to indicate that she is asking a question, she asks **Gwe gmwingwi?** Violet won't understand yet, so the teacher will tell her what to answer—**"'skwii'yu"**. So this lesson will have many different activities just like the last one, and by the end of it the students should be able to understand the difference between commands and first person verbs, and be able to use them appropriately (for these two verbs, anyway). Note that you are teaching them grammar—how to form a command and how to put a verb into first person. But you are not teaching it through English explanations, but rather through actually using the language. At first the students are just mimicking the words without understanding their grammatical structure, but eventually you will be able to give them a new verb in command form, and then ask them what they are doing, and they will respond in the first person form correctly even though they never heard you say it. When that happens, they know the grammar!

And one more step: in another lesson, if Horace is standing, look at Violet, gesture toward Horace, and ask Violet **"gwe wigwi?"** (meaning "What is s/he doing?") and start teaching the third-person form of the verbs in this manner (The answer Violet will learn to say is **"skwiikyu."** meaning "He is standing up."). Note something else about the lessons that you are giving in this manner: the students are learning how to actually communicate with you and with each other in the language. Since communicating in the language is the ultimate goal, you have already reached that goal in the very first lesson, albeit in a limited way.

So you see, now, that what this means for the teacher's own learning process is that she must work with her language mentor or her language materials to learn verbs (and classroom management language and patter, but we'll talk about that in sections C and D). Learn the command forms of a lot of verbs first and master them by practicing with your mentor just like you will later do in the classroom. Have your mentor tell you what to do; then tell her what to do. Play games with hand puppets; bring in friends and practice on them; do anything you can think of to use those commands. Later, start learning the first person forms of the verbs, and questions like "What are you doing?" which allows a short conversation to ensue between two people. Once you know the command forms and first-person forms of a lot of verbs, start learning and using the third person forms ("He/she is standing, etc."). Probably it is best to just focus on these three forms—commands, first person and third person—for quite a while. Don't bother with the plural forms (which, unlike English, will probably be different from the verbs in singular), or for the lesser-used "You are standing," etc. You'll want to learn all these eventually, but you can go through months of lessons without teaching them to the children.

What about nouns, you say? Well, sure, you can and must insert nouns into your lessons, but you will always be talking about nouns inside full sentences.

So when you are teaching nouns—let's say animal names—have stuffed animals or pictures of the animals present, and you'll be saying things like this (pretend the next sequence is all in Havasupai or in your language, not in English):

"This is a **coyote**." (hold up the stuffed coyote toy)
"Violet, take the coyote." (handing her the stuffed toy)
"Give the coyote to Horace." (said with appropriate gestures)
"Horace, bring the coyote to the table and put it down."
(Have a second animal that you teach the name of at the same time, and then;)
"Martha, is this a coyote?" (pointing to a bear); Martha says "No."
"Is this a coyote?" (pointing to the coyote); Martha says "Yes."
and later:
"Horace, is this a bear or a coyote?" (pointing to the coyote as you say it); Horace answers "Coyote".
Later still, you might have several copies each of a picture of a bear and of a coyote, with some of them sitting, some standing, etc.
"Violet, do you want a bear or a coyote?"
Violet might answer "Coyote," and so you give her a picture. Once you have gone around the room and everyone has a picture, you can ask
"Martha, what is the coyote doing?" and Martha might answer "He's running."

So even when you are teaching nouns, the verbs are prominent in the lesson. Thus when the teacher is developing her own knowledge of the language in order to teach it, she should learn verbs that will help her talk about nouns—verbs like "put," "give," "bring," "shake," "throw," "drop," and so on. The verbs that we discussed above, like "stand" and "sit," can also be used to describe what the animals are doing.

All this just scratches the surface of what kinds of things you will teach, and therefore learn in advance—but the main points here are these:

1. You only need to teach two or three new words in a given lesson
2. Focus on verbs a lot
3. Teach with a great deal of repetition, achieving it through many different activities
4. Learn from your mentor in the same way you will teach

B. Rituals. Verbal rituals are very pleasant, because their repetitive nature means that after awhile the language comes automatically and easily. However, don't get complacent: classroom rituals are also great occasions for new learning as well. Let us take the example of a greeting. At first you might teach children how to say "How are you?" "I'm fine" in the target language. But that can also be expanded to other emotions, such as "I'm sad," "I'm hungry," "I'm

tired," "I'm angry," "I'm happy," etc. So after the children have developed a mastery of "How are you?" "I'm fine?", you could start adding these other responses, teaching them through facial expressions and gestures, and games such as having a bunch of cards with a face on each one showing such emotions as happiness, sadness or anger, passing them out to the children, and when someone asks them "How are you?" they must respond by naming the emotion shown on the card.

If you do role call, use some language there too, beyond peoples' names. Instead of just calling out names, try learning how to say something like "Violet, are you here?" in the target language, and teach the students to respond with something like "I'm here," or "No, she's not here."

Another ritual would be to talk about the weather. Teach the children the words for various weather patterns (using pictures, not translations), such as sunny, rainy, snowy, windy, etc., and make it a daily ritual to ask the students to tell you what the weather is like outside. (Ancillary activities can include putting up a calendar and having a student put a sticker on the appropriate day showing which weather-type it is today; later you can talk with the students about how many sunny days there have been this month, and so on.)

So for the teacher-learner, you can figure out what rituals will be taking place in your class—greetings, goodbyes, weather, perhaps putting coats away, having a snack, and so on—and try to learn everything you can that relates to the rituals. For weather, besides learning to say "It's sunny," "It's raining," etc., you would also need to learn how to ask questions like "What's the weather like today?" Don't overwhelm yourself by trying to learn all the language about all the rituals right away; just master one, then add another, etc.

Another way you can learn to do linguistic rituals is for you and your mentor to develop your own. Of course you will greet each other, perhaps get a chair, make some coffee, get out a pencil and paper, etc. All of these are rituals that you can learn the verbal aspects of in your language. For getting a chair, learn how to say "Sit down," or "Let me get you a chair," or "Bring that chair over here," or "Are you comfortable?" and so on. Make sure that as the learner, you are part of the coffee-making ritual if that is part of the mentor's day. Ask the mentor to tell you what to do to make the coffee (in the Native language, not in English!), ask her if she would like some coffee, if she would like sugar, if she would like cream—later ask if she wants more, or if you can take her cup to the kitchen, etc.

C. Review. For the teacher-learner, once again there is good news. One reason why you only need to teach a few new phrases per lesson is that a class also needs a great deal of review. It takes a lot of repetition for students to master new material, and more repetition to make sure they don't forget it once it is learned. So make sure that every day they are given opportunity to practice what they learned before.

Review need not be separate from the lesson proper, but instead can be part of it. For example, if yesterday you taught the class "stand up" and "sit down," today you can do the same kinds of activities and add "hop" and "turn around"

to the list. You might play a game like "Simon says" (which would usually be turned into something like "Coyote says") with the growing set of verbs. We also saw that if you are teaching nouns, such as animal names, you can provide additional practice of the verbs by asking what the animal is doing. Thus everything you do in class combines old and new vocabulary, and therefore constitutes both review and new learning at the same time.

The implications for the teacher's own learning are mainly that you should always think up new activities that will allow review, in order to keep the review interesting, and so you would need to learn the vocabulary and phrases that will go with the new activities. For example, if you decide to review the verbs through a new game such as "Coyote says," you'd have to learn how to say phrases like "Coyote says 'stand up'". These are *formulas*: the formula in this case is "Coyote says "_____", and then you just put in whatever vocabulary you like. (In Havasupai, it would be **Hatbaahj "_____" 'ig'i**, where the verb for "say" comes after the quote.) Perhaps you are going to have a test where you have pictures of animals doing various things, and you will ask the students to circle the correct picture—then you have to learn how to say "Which coyote is sitting?"

D. Classroom management language. A common problem in language-teaching is that the lesson might all be in the Native language, but the teacher might break into English whenever some discipline issue comes up, or some other event that is outside the lesson proper. Since the goal is for *everything* in the classroom to take place in the Native language, not in English, one thing the teacher-learner should focus a good deal of time on learning is *classroom management language*. I mentioned a few such utterances in the sample lesson above—words like *"Good!"* or *"Listen!"* or *"Draw a circle around the right answer"* are examples of classroom management language. Here are a few of the many classroom management utterances that Juliette Blevins (2003) put in a delightful manual for the Yurok tribe for preschool teaching.

'oyekwi'.[1]	Hello!
'o'lomah	Come on in!
Chini neskwechoo'm!	You're early!
Nohse'nes k'e-ch'wona'.	Take off your coat.
Wonik soo'nes k'e-chewes!	Raise your hand!
Chpe'royos!	Listen!
Mos komchowok'.	I don't understand.
Skuyaapele'm.	You are being good.
Ch'umey 'we-noorew ku k'e-kwrhl.	How pretty your picture is!
Kowecho pelemew!	Don't fight!
Noson k'e-chwegin!	Stop it!
Cho' chpurko'm!	Be careful!
Kiti 'ahke'm hes?	Do you need to pee?
Kich 'i roo ki 'ne-kemeye'moh.	It's time for us to go home.
Chuu'.	Goodbye.
Kowecho kahselume'm k'e-ch'wona'.	Don't forget your coat.

It would be wonderful for every language program to develop a phrase-book with phrases like this for the teachers to learn. As this illustrates, one thing the teacher-learner needs to focus on with the language mentor is all the various utterances that will need to be said for classroom management. The more you can learn before you start teaching, the better. Once again, though, it is not enough to put these phrases down in a list—you must actually *know* them, and be able to use them spontaneously when the situation arises. Mastering the utterances well enough to be able to respond to emergencies (e.g. "Horace, don't hit!!" or "Quick, run to the bathroom!") takes a lot of practice, and practicing them with your mentor through various kinds of role-playing and fantasy scenarios will help enormously.

But things are certain to come up in the classroom that you didn't expect and that you don't know the response language for. In those cases you can try to respond non-verbally, but sometimes you may be forced to switch to English. If you do, get right back into the Native language immediately. The moments when you find a situation you don't know the language for are important to keep track of; those utterances are the very next thing you are going to ask your mentor about. Keep a pocket notebook handy to jot down words and phrases that you must ask your mentor about the next time you get together.

E. Chit-chat, or classroom patter. There is not a strong distinction between classroom management language and classroom patter; some phrases have both functions. But in general, classroom patter is the hardest component for the non-fluent teacher-learner, because it is generally improvised and not focused on any particular formula. It is the kind of language that we put between everything else—things like "Let's see, what shall we do now?" or "Well, I had an adventure yesterday...." Classroom patter in the target language may not be possible for a non-fluent teacher, especially at first. The only way I can see for a teacher-learner to get good at classroom patter is to practice informal conversation with the mentor. So every time the two of you get together, spend some time just talking about things in your Native language. Have your mentor tell you little tales of things s/he did yesterday or when she was young, to develop your understanding. Learn how to talk about places you've gone or meals you've cooked, or some plan you are making for a trip, or something that happened to you when you were a child.

Also, learn from your mentor what to say when you don't know what to say! In English, we have "hesitation words" like "Um," or "Let's see," or "Well,..." We also might use words like "So," "and" or "but" after a pause, or even something like "Okay". What do native speakers of your language say in situations like that? There is a whole range of vocabulary items called "discourse markers" that include these hesitation words, and other things that come in between sentences. Interestingly, it is very common for people who are otherwise fluent in their Native language to slip into English for these discourse markers. Wouldn't it be great to learn how to use them in your language rather than English?

Storytelling.

One kind of "lesson proper" is storytelling. Even a non-fluent speaker can tell a story, although it may not have the rich fluency of a story told by a native speaker. Think in "units" consisting of several or many sessions, rather than just miscellaneous lessons. A story can be a unit for weeks or months. My colleague Nancy Richardson Steele (Karuk) incorporates storytelling into her curriculum. The following sketch of how you can use storytelling is based on her work:

a. Have your mentor tell you a story, and record it. Ask her to translate it for you. You won't use this story in your class for a long time, but it will be a reference for you as you develop your unit.
b. Learn vocabulary associated with the story. For example, there is a Karuk story that Nancy Steele uses in her language classes. The story is about Robin, whose mother wanted him to marry, and she kept bringing in girls wearing traditional skirts made out of different things: pine nuts, abalone, juniper berries, etc. To teach this story, one would learn vocabulary and simple sentences relating to these themes: e.g. how did the story talk about "getting married", and how would you say the different items like "pine nuts," "abalone," "skirt"—how do you say "Robin?" Learn simple sentences like "The man and the woman are getting married." "The girl is wearing a skirt." "The skirt is made of abalone."
c. Incorporate the vocabulary and sentences into lessons. In a lesson about clothing, include the name of the traditional skirt. When talking about birds, include Robin. Bring in abalone shell pieces, pine nuts, and juniper berries and teach the names of those. Bring in pictures of people doing different things, and have one of them be of two people getting married.
d. One day, tell the story in English—perhaps using the Indian words for the vocabulary the students have already learned, such as Robin, skirt, abalone, etc. Ask the students to make pictures about the different parts of the story (e.g. Robin's mother telling him she wants him to get married; a girl coming in wearing an abalone dress; another girl wearing a juniper berry dress; etc.). Have them practice the words that they know in the language that are part of the picture. Collect those pictures for use in the next steps.
e. Play the Native language recording of the story, while showing the picture; the memory of having heard it in English along with seeing the sequence of pictures will help them understand the story. Afterwards ask them what words they heard that they know. From then on, play the story occasionally when students are arriving, or having snacktime or drawing or doing some other quiet activity.
f. Meanwhile, you are building up your own knowledge, week by week, of how to tell the story (in simple sentences, probably—not exactly the way the speaker might have told it). Keep incorporating more vocabulary, phrases and sentences from the story into your activities.
g. For a special occasion, the speaker can come to class and tell the story herself, while you show the pictures in sequence. (The speaker is a very

special person, so make sure the students do special things for her, greeting her in the language, bringing her snacks, etc.)

h. Develop a play with your class, which will be narrated and performed by the students. Over a period of time, the students can work on making puppets or costumes, backdrops, etc., and develop the lines that everyone will be using.

i. Invite parents and community and perform it!

Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to give some basic ideas of how to teach conversational language, and how a teacher who is not fluent in the language could develop effective lessons. The key points for good language teaching are to:

1. Speak in the language as much as possible, and avoid switching to English to translate what you are saying, focusing instead on nonverbal communication to make yourself understood;
2. Focus on teaching just a few words per lesson; vary the activities in your lesson and in subsequent lessons to allow lots of practice of the vocabulary and sentences;
3. Make sure that the communication outside the lesson proper is in the target language as much as possible. Don't switch to English for classroom management talk and teacher patter;
4. Use language rituals—things your class talks about every day, such as greetings, or the weather, or snack time. These are helpful in part because they are real communication, thus giving your language a role to play in the community;
5. The teacher-learner should work with a fluent elder to learn the language necessary for a given lesson. Whenever the teacher-learner realizes in the classroom that she doesn't know how to say something, retain it in memory or jot in down, and ask the language mentor how to say it.

Finally, language teaching is hard whether you are fluent or not. And for the non-fluent teacher there is a great deal of preparation to do in advance of the lesson. But the reward comes both inside and outside the classroom, when you hear children greeting each other or otherwise using their ancestral language out in the air.

Notes

[1]Thanks to Nancy Steele, Terry and Sarah Supahan, Wayne and Agnes Holm, Chris Sims, Mary Eunice Romero, and Alice Bartholomew, whose great understanding of language teaching methods and language lesson content have been a major influence on this paper and on everything I do in the field of language teacher training.

[2]Sometimes there are no fluent speakers at all, and a teacher has written or taped documentation as the only resource. I will not focus on that situation here, but much of material I will talk about here could be learned by the teacher-learner from written documents.

[3]"Passive speakers" or "latent speakers" as they are sometimes called (Basham & Fathman, 2001) may surprise themselves at how much they learn in a year, though; there is much knowledge there, and it only needs to be activated.

[4]In a bill currently before the Senate, Resolution 575, the term "language survival school" is introduced, and defined as a school "that provides a complete education through a Native American language with the specific goal of strengthening, revitalizing, or reestablishing a Native American language and culture as a living language and culture of daily life." These are also often called language immersion schools.

[5]Havasupai is a American Indian language spoken in Northern Arizona. I spent a number of years studying Havasupai, and I am thankful for all I was taught there. However, I am by no means a fluent speaker, so my attempts to create lessons in Havasupai should serve as a good model of teaching by a non-fluent speaker! I am sure I have made some grammatical and spelling errors, for which I hope I will be forgiven, as any non-fluent teacher hopes to be forgiven.

[6]Words in parentheses are part of classroom management language or chit-chat (see D and E) and are not the words actually being focused on in the lesson. But by inserting this extra speech to the extent that the teacher is able, the language input is enriched, and the students are unconsciously learning some of the extra vocabulary being introduced in this way.

[7]This isn't entirely correct grammar; a direct quotation is normally ended with the word *mic!* "Say it!" But I find that if I include that, students try to copy the *mic* along with the rest of the quote. So for the first few rounds, I just leave off ***mic,*** but start putting it in softly once the students have understood and started repeating after me.

[8]This is the linguistic version of Yurok spelling. Blevins is presently redoing the manual using the Yurok official writing system.

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